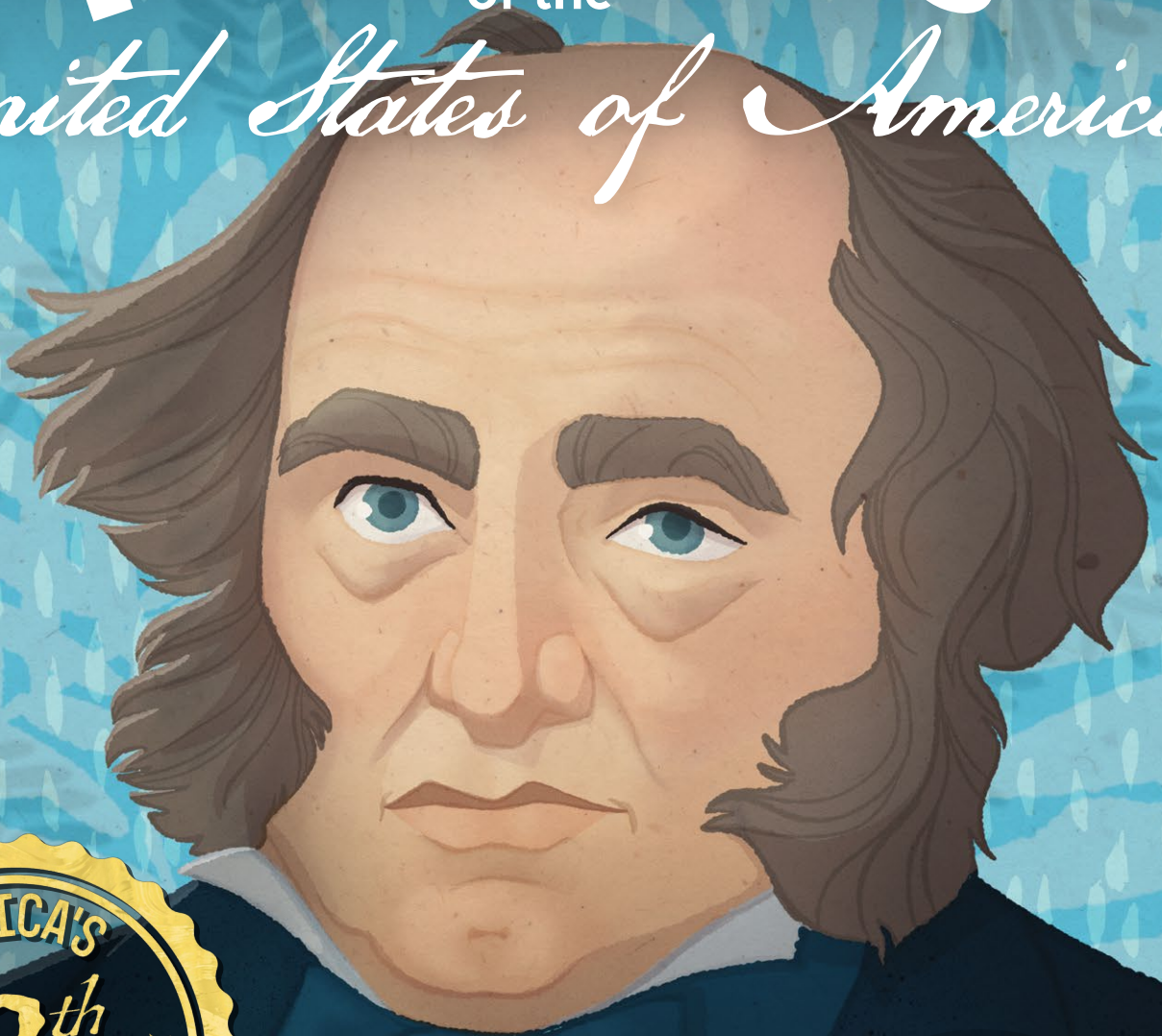


# presidents of the *United States of America*



"I helped create the modern political party and served as the 8th President of the United States."

**Martin Van Buren**

# Become a Presidential Historian by Solving This Puzzle



In this magazine, you'll learn all sorts of facts about Martin Van Buren's amazing life and accomplishments. But there's still one last thing we need to know about him.

The Sultan of Oman gave Van Buren two pets, and we need to know what kind of animal they were. Your task is to help us uncover the answer! Hidden in the text are bolded letters. Read this magazine carefully to find them and fill the letters into the blanks below in the order they appear.

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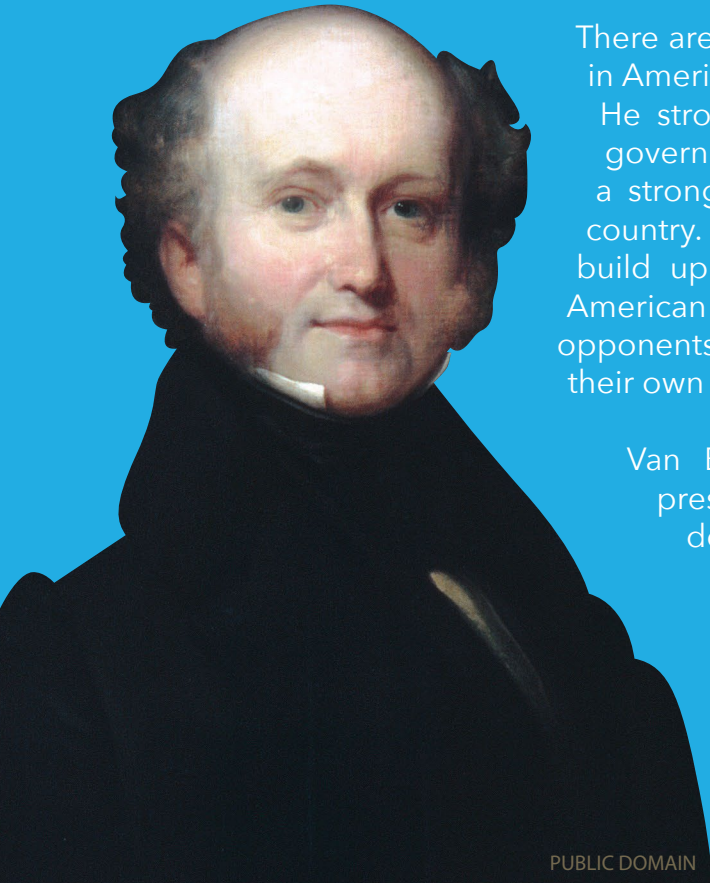
Once you've solved this puzzle, you'll be a true PragerU Kids presidential historian!

## Meet Martin Van Buren

Have you ever wondered why America has political parties? The Constitution says nothing about parties and many of the Founding Fathers hoped America wouldn't have them. So, why do we have them?

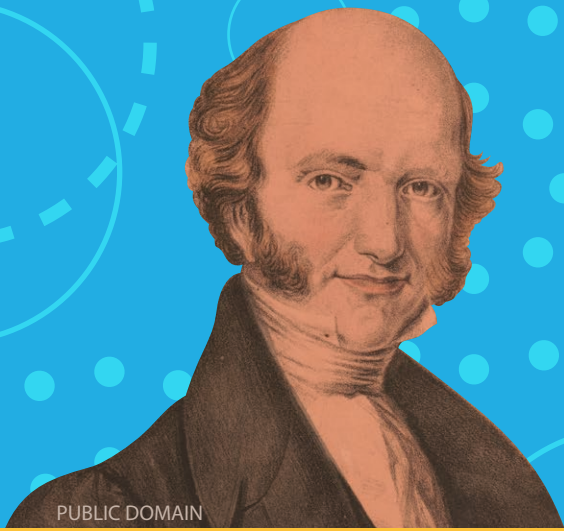
There are many people who contributed to the creation of parties in America, but Martin Van Buren played one of the biggest roles. He strongly believed in the Jeffersonian principles of limited government and felt the best way to promote them was to build a strong, well-organized party with connections all across the country. Van Buren worked with President Andrew Jackson to build up the Democratic Party, making it a powerful force in American politics. **T**hey were so successful that even their opponents, the Whigs, copied many of their strategies to build up their own party.

Van Buren succeeded Jackson and served one term as president from 1837 to 1841. Unfortunately, an economic depression during his presidency destroyed his popularity. His critics then and now say that, by inventing the modern political party, Van Buren helped divide the country and introduce corruption. His supporters respond that he helped Jackson make America a more democratic place. While Van Buren's career may be controversial, he did play a major role in the creation of our modern political system.



PUBLIC DOMAIN





## Young Martin

Martin Van Buren was born on December 5, 1782 in Kinderhook, New York to Abraham and Maria Van Buren. Their family's ancestors were **Dutch** immigrants. Young Martin had three older half siblings and four full siblings. Although the Van Burens struggled to earn a living, they did own six slaves and had a tavern in Kinderhook, where they hosted many important government officials. From these visitors, young Martin got his first taste of American politics as he listened to them discuss the major issues confronting the young nation.

Martin attended a small school in Kinderhook and, when he was about thirteen, started working at a law firm. Although he never attended college, he passed the bar in 1803, becoming a lawyer at the age of 21.



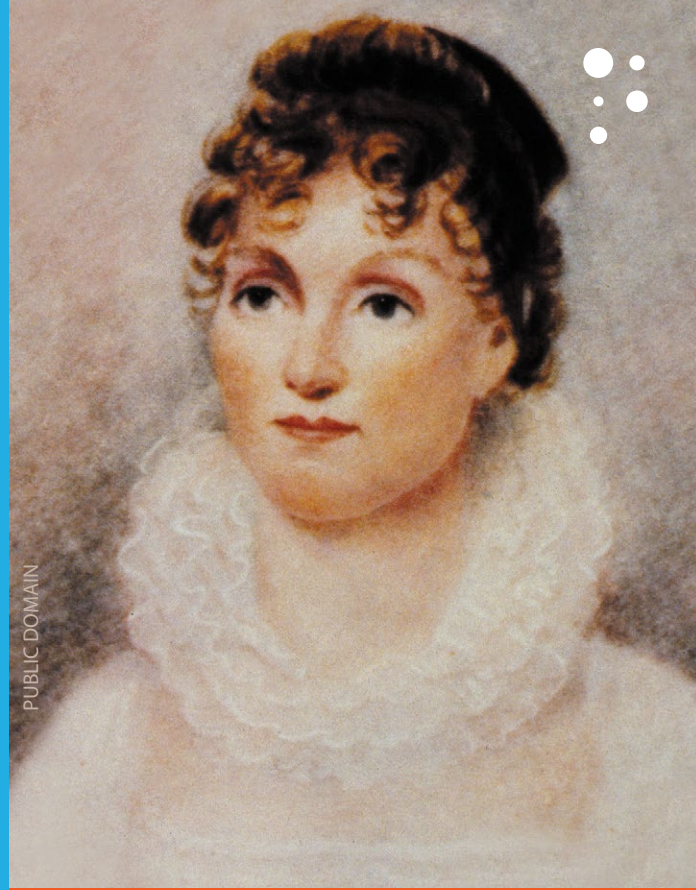
## Interesting Facts

- He was the first president born after the United States declared independence from Great Britain.
- He was a member of the Democratic Party.
- He was the first president to not have British ancestry.
- He was the first president whose first language wasn't English (it was Dutch).
- He was the first former president to run for president again after leaving office.
- His cunning political skills led his friends to nickname him the "Little Magician" and the "Sly Fox."
- He was also nicknamed "Old Kinderhook," in reference to him being from Kinderhook, New York.
- Since Van Buren was a widower, his daughter-in-law, Angelica Van Buren, served as First Lady at the age of 20 - the youngest to ever serve as White House hostess.

## Early Career

Van Buren prospered as an attorney, and in 1807, married his childhood sweetheart Hannah Hoes. They had five children, four of whom lived to adulthood. Sadly, Hannah died of tuberculosis in 1819, which left Van Buren a widower at the age of 36.

He also got more involved in politics. Although the Federalist Party was popular in New York, Van Buren and his family supported Thomas Jefferson and his Democratic-Republican Party, which advocated for **states' rights**. He was elected to the New York State Senate in 1812. During this time, the two parties battled fiercely for control of the state. Van Buren emerged as a major leader of the New York Democratic-Republicans and organized the party into an effective, disciplined **political machine**. Although he did not have an impressive stature (he was just five-foot-six) and was not an especially **gifted** speaker, he was one of the most powerful and well-connected politicians in the state.



Hannah Van Buren



## Quote

*"Next to being right, it is important to governments, as well as individuals, to be consistent."*

*- March 1826*

## National Leader

In 1821, Van Buren was elected to the U.S. Senate. He moved to Washington, DC to begin his national career. Just as he did in New York, he worked to strengthen the national Democratic-Republican Party. He did this by building alliances with politicians across the country. He found a strong partner in Andrew Jackson, the military hero of the War of 1812 and presidential candidate in 1824. They were united in their belief in states' rights and opposition to the **national bank**. Although Jackson lost the 1824 election, he did finally win in 1828, thanks to both his charisma and Van Buren's brilliant political strategy and organization.



# The Jackson Era

Van Buren was elected Governor of New York that same year, but instead of moving back home, he accepted Jackson's offer to serve as Secretary of State. In 1832, Jackson selected Van Buren as his running-mate. They easily won the presidential election that year, which meant Van Buren served as Jackson's vice president from 1833 to 1837.

Jackson's presidency was controversial, as he went to war against the **political establishment**. President Jackson portrayed himself as a man of the people, and attacked powerful entities, such as the national bank. The country split between his supporters, led by the Democratic Party, and his critics, led by the Whig Party. Van Buren was one of the president's closest advisors and took the lead in running the Democrats, unifying its various **factions** across multiple states. Under the Jackson-Van Buren partnership, the Democrats attracted strong support from the "**common man**" and worked to allow more people to vote.

Together, they implemented what was called the **spoils system**, in which loyal Jackson supporters were appointed to important positions in the government. Some felt this led to incompetent, corrupt officials taking over the government, while the Jacksonians responded that this allowed them to replace corrupt officials in the establishment.



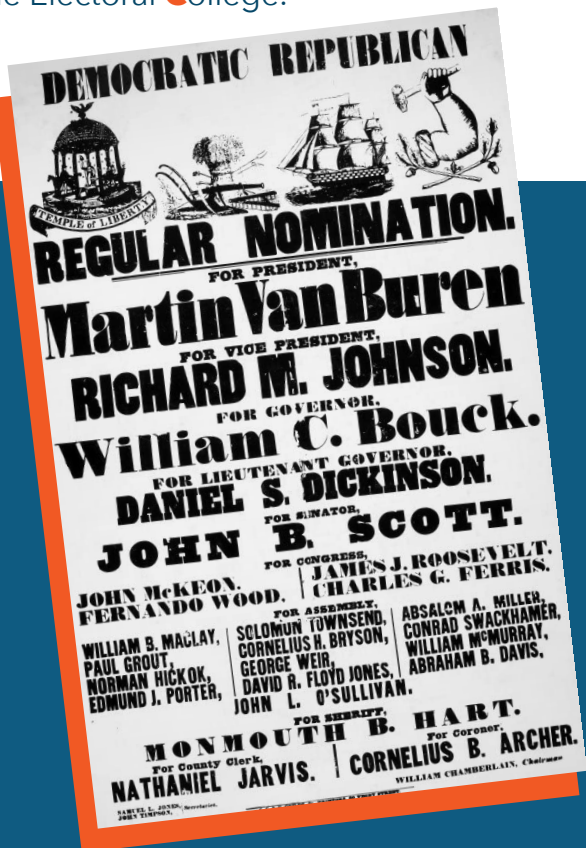
## Quote

"Political parties are inseparable from free governments... in many and material respects, they are highly useful to the country."  
- Autobiography



# The 1836 Election

Van Buren's loyalty was rewarded in 1836 when the Democrats nominated him as their candidate to succeed Jackson. Van Buren had several opponents, but his main Whig challenger was William Henry Harrison who, like Jackson, was a successful general from the War of 1812. During the campaign, Van Buren promised to continue Jackson's policies. The American people, still in love with Jackson, chose Van Buren by a comfortable margin; 170 votes to 73 for Harrison in the Electoral College.



## Vice Presidents

As of 2022, fifteen vice presidents have become president. Eight of them became president because of the death of their predecessor, and one due to resignation. Van Buren is one of only four men who have been directly elected to the presidency from the vice presidency (along with John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and George H.W. Bush). The remaining two were elected several years after they served as vice president (Richard Nixon and Joe Biden).

## President

Van Buren did, indeed, continue some of Jackson's policies. For instance, he further removed Native American tribes to lands west of the Mississippi River.

The major event of his presidency, however, occurred two months after moving into the White House: the Panic of 1837. Banks began collapsing, businesses went bankrupt, and workers everywhere lost their jobs.

There were many reasons for the Panic, such as economic problems in Europe that made their way to the United States through trade and investment. Also, some historians believe that Andrew Jackson's policies, which reduced the amount of paper money, contributed to the Panic, making it harder for people to access cash.

To address the situation, Van Buren proposed an **independent treasury** system, which Congress passed in 1840, but it wasn't enough to rebuild Van Buren's popularity. By then, critics had nicknamed him "Martin Van Ruin." In 1840, William Henry Harrison and his Whig Party took advantage of the crisis and won the presidency.

## Quote

"The principle that will govern me in the high duty to which my country calls me is a strict adherence to the letter and spirit of the Constitution."

- March 1837



# Retirement



Despite losing his re-election bid, Van **B**uren remained active. He had his eye on winning back the presidency in 1844, but he angered many in his party when he opposed **annexing** Texas to the Union as a new state. Van Buren worried that adding Texas, a slave state, would anger those who opposed slavery and divide the country, since it would give greater representation in Congress to slaveholders. The Democrats, excited at the prospect of annexing Texas, rejected Van Buren as their nominee in 1844. Van Buren then ran as the nominee for the anti-slavery Free **S**oil Party in 1848 and got just 10% of the vote. By then, Van Buren's career was effectively over.

When the Civil War began in 1861, Van Buren supported President Lincoln's policies to keep the Union together. He died in the city of his birth, Kinderhook, New York, on July 24, 1862 at the age of 79.

## Quote

"From a small community we have risen to a people powerful in numbers and in strength; but with our increase has gone hand in hand the progress of just principles."

- March 1837

PUBLIC DOMAIN



# Legacy

Not every president made their biggest contributions to the country while they were in the White House. Some made a major impact before the presidency. Martin Van Buren is one of them. Before Van Buren's career, many of America's leaders criticized the existence of political parties, even if they belonged to one. At best, they considered parties necessary, but feared they would divide and break up the country. In public, these leaders claimed their obligation was to their country, not their party.

Van Buren was one of the first American leaders who completely embraced parties, saying they were actually good and necessary for the country. He believed that citizens could prevent anyone from getting too powerful by organizing into parties to stop them. By helping to create the Democrats into an efficient and effective organization, he created the blueprint for future parties to gain power.

Political parties continue to play a major role in America's system of government. Not everyone believes this is a good thing, but as long as they are around, Martin Van Buren's legacy will continue to influence us.



## Quote

*"The framers of our excellent constitution... wisely judged that the less government interferes with private pursuits, the better for the general prosperity."  
- September 1837*



# Word Search



G K U N J J N D B A D P U Q G  
 Q O V N Y T D N J K H D Z V C  
 F E C B C N D Y O N H P K V D  
 G P C K M L F W E I E S W P X  
 A K N A B L A N O I T A N W Q  
 Z N C U J B C U D A F C J A J  
 W N N W E Z N O T I U D A N N  
 Q Y A E X X Y E F H H C N F A  
 N C J Q X Y S R G O N V P D M  
 B S D Z N R T V D J C X P Q N  
 J S S Z I F V L U F D J W X O  
 B D P G C B F N T Z J T V I M  
 R X H P A B N Y C V N M H S M  
 V T I P D R T A H A F V F D O  
 S S P O I L S S Y S T E M X C

**Dutch**

**States Rights**

**National Bank**

**Faction**

**Common Man**

**Spoils System**

**Annex**

## “OK!”

You’ve probably heard of the term “OK” or “okay,” which is usually used to show agreement or acceptance. There are many theories as to where the word came from – it may have originated with the Choctaw word “okeh.” Some historians believe that Martin Van Buren inadvertently played a role in making the term popular. Since his nickname was “Old Kinderhook,” which was then shortened to “OK,” many people began using the term to refer to him, and eventually used it for its current meaning.



# Glossary

**Dutch:** Referring to the people, language, or culture of the Netherlands.

**States' Rights:** The political powers of the states within the United States.

**Political Machine:** An organization, usually led by a boss or group with powerful political influence over a city or area. They are often considered corrupt.

**National Bank:** A financial institution created by the nation's government to manage the country's banking system and money supply.

**Political Establishment:** The group of people who have the most power in a political system.

**Faction:** A group of people who have the same political beliefs or goals that differ from other groups.

**Common Man:** An ordinary man without high social status or significant wealth; usually comprising the majority of a country's population.

**Spoils System:** A practice in which a political party, after winning an election, appoints its supporters and followers to positions in the government.

**Independent Treasury:** A system used by the U.S. government from the 1840s to the 1910s where it managed the money supply through the U.S. Treasury instead of a national bank.

**Annex:** To take possession of or add territory or a state to a country.

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**Images:** Getty Images, WikiCommons

## Answers:

ANIMAL SULTAN GAVE  
VAN BUREN:  
TIGER CUBS

G	K	U	N	J	J	N	D	B	A	D	P	U	Q	G
Q	O	V	N	Y	T	D	N	J	K	H	D	Z	V	C
F	E	C	B	C	N	D	Y	O	N	H	P	K	V	D
G	P	C	K	M	L	F	W	E	I	E	S	W	P	X
A	K	N	A	B	L	A	N	O	I	T	A	N	W	Q
Z	N	C	U	J	B	C	U	D	A	F	C	J	A	J
W	N	N	W	E	Z	N	O	T	I	U	D	A	N	N
Q	Y	A	E	X	X	Y	E	F	H	C	N	F	A	
N	C	J	Q	X	Y	S	R	G	O	N	V	P	D	M
B	S	D	Z	N	R	T	V	D	J	C	X	P	Q	N
J	S	S	Z	I	F	V	L	U	F	D	J	W	X	O
B	D	P	G	C	B	F	N	T	Z	J	T	V	I	M
R	X	H	P	A	B	N	Y	C	V	N	M	H	S	M
V	T	I	P	D	R	T	A	H	A	F	V	F	D	O
S	S	P	O	I	L	S	S	Y	S	T	E	M	X	C

